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ABSTRACT

Governors State University (University Park, Illinois) includes a three-credit course in collaborative consultation in its Master's degree program in multicategorical special education. A survey of 72 program graduates sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the consultation coursework. Responses from 39 of the graduates indicated that the role of consultation in the field of special education is small. The consultation skills taught have not been utilized in a formal manner, although some special education teachers employ the techniques informally. The content of the course was affirmed as appropriate. In summary, the skills appear to be appreciated by graduates but the demand for consultation programs in schools appears questionable. A copy of the survey form and comments received from respondents are included. (11 references) (JDD)

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Efficacy of Collaborative Consultation Coursework in Personnel Preparation of Special Education Teachers

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Running head:* *EFFICACY OF COLLABORATIVE CONSULTATION COURSEWORK

ABSTRACT

Collaborative consultation is described as a popular model for quality interaction between regular and special educators. Governors State University includes coursework in collaborative consultation in its Master's Degree in Multicategorical (Cross-categorical) special education (LD, BD, & EMH). A three credit hour graduate course in consultation was developed to train special educators in skills needed to best fulfill their roles in successful mainstreaming (i.e. interacting appropriately with staff and parents; being involved in pre-referral activities; demonstrating appropriate role in building educational team etc.). In five years the program has produced 72 graduates, and the faculty decided to evaluate the effectiveness of the consultation coursework through a questionnaire sent to the graduates. The study sought to evaluate whether the consultation skills taught are being applied, whether the roles that were presupposed actually are a part of the graduate's job, whether the course content contains all skills needed by a special education teacher, and what barriers and obstacles exist to implementing a consultation role and how they may be eliminated.

Efficacy of Collaborative Consultation Coursework in Personnel Preparation of Special Education Teachers

Generally it is agreed that collaborative consultation holds great promise as an important factor in successful mainstreaming (Friend, 1984; Lilly & Givens-Ogle, 1987; West & Idol, 1987; Will, 1986). It can reduce the use of pull-out programs for students identified as mildly handicapped, help bring about their successful academic and social integration, and lead to a higher self concept. The favored model of collaborative consultation in the school setting consists of the following characteristics:

1. An indirect service to the student involving a consultant (special education teacher), a consultee (regular education teacher) and a student or students (triadic model);
2. Parity between two teachers; i.e., co-ownership of problem and process. The consultee selects the solution that will be tried;
3. Problem solving as the goal, with the student(s) as the target; and
4. A three-fold outcome:
   a. Problem resolution;
   b. Increase in consultee skill and knowledge that can be applied independently in the future;
   c. Use of successful consultee in future similar situations

as consultant.

While other elements appear, these are the ones usually cited (Curtis & Meyers, 1988; De Boer, 1986; Idol, 1988; Phillips, 1990).

If consultation is to be successful the consultant must know how to serve in that role and preservice training in consultation should be an integral part of any degree program in special education. Consultants need training in: interpersonal communication and problem solving, interviewing, effective written language, providing inservice training, collecting and analyzing data, developing goals and objectives, designing a change plan and evaluating the success of an intervention, all carried out in a collaborative interaction with a consultee (Blankenship & Lilly, 1981; De Boer, 1986; Idol, Poolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986; Idol & West, 1987). Direct teaching in the regular classroom as a team teacher or with small groups or to model a method also needs to be a part of the training curriculum.

At Governors State University, the Multicategorical Masters Degree program includes a three credit hour course on collaborative consultation. After five years and 72 graduates, the faculty wanted information about the efficacy of the course in training special educators for their consultation role.

METHOD

Subjects and Questions

Through the use of a survey mailed to all multicategorical masters degree graduates since the inception of the program in 1984, it was sought to determine:

1. Are the consultation skills taught in SPED 860, Consultation Techniques for Special Education, utilized by graduates and in what way?
2. How has the graduate's use of collaborative consultation changed since the completion of SPED 860, Consultation Techniques for Special Education?
3. How can the course content of SPED 860, Consultation Techniques for Special Education, help graduates institute a greater collaborative consultation role for special educators?

Procedure

A survey was mailed to all 72 graduates.

Insert Appendix 1 here

Results

Delays in dissemination have produced only a 54% return thus far. Results reported as of this writing will be updated after more surveys are returned.

Insert Appendix 2 here

Insert Appendix 3 here

Insert Appendix 4 here

Discussion

This writer is as disappointed as Friend (1984) and West and Idol (1987), to learn that the role of consultation in the field is so small. Some researchers report the major reason for such a small consultation role for special educators as the lack of preservice training in consultation skills (Curtis & Meyers, 1988). This explanation seems questionable since all 39 of the graduates responding received training which included: Starting the service, a specific collaborative consultative model, listening and interpersonal skills, assessment and adaptation strategies, team teaching, and inservice training skills. The consultation skills taught have not been utilized in a formal manner; i.e., in consultation programs by special educators, although some special education teachers employ the techniques informally. The same can be said for the second research question i.e., the role of consultation has not changed after taking the course but in some cases personal interaction styles have

changed. Regarding research question three, the current content of the course was affirmed as appropriate but how to institute a larger consultation role was not addressed. In summary, the skills appear to be appreciated by graduates but the demand for the program in schools appears questionable.

Although small, the initial results of this study are disturbing and elicit several questions for future investigations. Why have graduates skilled in consultation not implemented said skills? Has this happed because: regular teachers are uncooperative; administrators are unsupportive; of personality factors; of time constraints; of type of classroom serviced or are special educators not attempting to implement consultations?

Without such a consultation program and regular teachers not trained to mainstream successfully, the future of mainstreaming appears bleak. Governors State University will continue to include this course while investigating how to promote collaborative consultation programs in the schools.

Figure 1.

Consultation Survey

Name_____

Social Security #:_____Home Phone_____

Address:_____

_____

When did you graduate with your MCSE degree?_____

Where do you teach?_____

Address:_____

Handicap(s) served?_____

Ages:_____Grades_____

No. of students on your class list:_____

No. of male:_____No. of female:_____

Check one: Self contained_____

Resource:_____Both:_____

What grade did you receive in SPED 860?_____

Figure 1 con't.

On the following questionnaire, please circle the most appropriate level.

1 - never
2 - seldom
3 - sometimes
4 - frequently
5 - always

Definitions:

Consultation: to confer with another person

Expert consultation: to provide a plan that another person is to carry out

Collaborative consultation: to plan together with another person to assist them in developing a plan to carry out

PLEASE COMPLETE THE ATTACHED QUESTIONNAIRE:

Section A

1. I plan collaboratively with regular education teachers regarding student needs. 1 2 3 4 5

   If you circled level 1 on the above question please do not continue but do return the questionnaire. Thank you for your trouble.

   If you circled levels 2, 3, 4, or 5 on question 1, approximately how many hours per week do you plan collaboratively with regular teachers?_____

2. I use a collaborative consultation model when planning with regular teachers. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I use an expert consultation model when planning with regular teachers. 1 2 3 4 5

   If you primarily use an expert consultation model, please explain why:_____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Figure 1 con't.

Section B

4. I plan collaboratively with parents in team meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I plan collaboratively with parents one to one in meetings at school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I plan collaboratively with parents on the telephone and by writing notes.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I use a collaborative consultative model when planning with parents.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I use an expert consultation model when planning with parents.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

Section C

9. I team teach with regular teacher(s).	1	2	3	4	5
10. I teach my students in the regular classroom instead of pulling them out.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When I work in the regular classroom with a student identified as being in need of special education, I add regular students to my groups.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

_____

Figure 1 con't.

Section D

12. I serve as a member of a prereferral team	1	2	3	4	5
13. I collaboratively consult directly with regular teachers regarding preferral cases.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I assist regular teachers in adapting teaching materials and teaching strategies.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

_____

Section E

15. I present inservices on practices that make mainstreaming work.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I teach others to use peer tutoring.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I teach others to use cooperative learning groups.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I teach others to develop classroom management strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I conduct data collections in regular classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

_____

Figure 1 con't.

Section F

20. I apply situational leadership (Idol) when working with regular teachers.	NA	1	2	3	4	5
21. I apply the DeBoer personality types model when working with regular teachers.	NA	1	2	3	4	5
22. I apply active listening techniques (Gargiulo) when working with regular teachers.	NA	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

_____

Section G

23. Since completing SPED 860, Consultative Techniques for Special Education, how has your use of collaborative consultation changed?

_____

_____

_____

24. How can the course content of SPED 860, Consultation Techniques for Special Education, help graduates institute a greater collaborative consultation role for special educators?

_____

_____

_____

Figure 2

Replies So Far

# sent: 72	*# replied: 39*	*51% return so far*
Out of 39:		
1. How many teach regular ed?	6	15%
2. How many are special ed. self-contained teachers?	20	51%
a. out of those, how many have a consultation role?	*14*	*70%*
b. out of those, how many do not have a consultation role?	*6*	*30%*
c. average amount of time spent on consultation?	*.95/hr. per week*	
3. How many are resource teachers?	5	13%
a. how many have a consultation role?	*5*	*100%*
b. what is the average amount of time spent on consultation?	*1.2 hours per week*	
4. How many are both resource and self contained?	8	20%
how many have a consultation role?	*5*	*65%*
b. what is the average amount of time spent on consultation?	*1.5 hours per week*	

1-25-90

Figure 3

Written Comments From Section G

Question 23.

Resource teachers:

I hope to implement a more "collaborative" consulting approach with the teachers I work with.

I take more time in the beginning stages of a consultation in order to come to solid consensus.

I have felt more confident in ways to approach, assist and work with the regular education teachers. Also, I see the greater need for help and the very limited support given to regular teachers.

SPED 860 helped me to identify consultation as a useful technique/strategy for dealing with regular teachers, counselors, parents, and social workers.

Self-contained teachers:

Less formal, teachers just come to me and ask what type of method they can use.

When consulting I have realized the importance of remaining open and flexible to the ideas of others and try to effectively incorporate these opinions.

The class taught me the importance of it and gave me techniques to utilize.

My approach to other regular teachers is to listen and then advise using their input and help to devise a strategy rather than to expect them to regard me as an expert. They need to "buy into" a technique for it to work.

SPED 860 gave me valuable knowledge to use in the high school setting.

I feel that I am better at giving and receiving feedback, I can use confrontation skills appropriately, and have better class management techniques.

I use active listening techniques more often and with more positive results.

Figure 3 con't.

I work with their personalities better instead of the direct approach about what is the right thing to do.

Regular education teachers:

A great deal: I didn't know what collaborative consultation was until SPED 860.

Both self contained and resource teachers:

I am more assertive in the area of planning and implementing methods of teaching a class combination of 25 regular ed. and 10 LD.

Question 24.

Resource Teachers:

Emphasize the importance of "building up" the regular ed. teachers by letting them know how difficult their job is and the real need to interact with the teachers instead of stepping in and directing.

Emphasize collaboration since it ties in with the reform movement's focus on shared-decision making and arriving at a consensus.

PR as a special educator is very important. Need to stress techniques/strategies to help the special educator gain acceptance from the regular education teachers. Some view resource teachers as teachers with all the answers.

Self contained teachers:

Emphasize teaching others how to use some of the techniques learned in SPED 860 and how to conduct inservices on same.

Good idea having presentations demonstrating different methods. They are used often.

Stress a non-threatening approach toward other teachers and administrators. Also, to remember to involve the student (if possible and practical) when devising working or behavior systems.

1. Viewing a district that utilizes consultation to a great extent would be helpful to student.
2. Sitting in on collaborative meetings.

Figure 3 con't.

3. Having more situational role model opportunities in class with students actively participating and formulating different problem situations.

The exposure to the collaborative consultation techniques was valuable. The role playing activities done in class were helpful demonstrations of how the techniques worked in the "real" world.

The course will help graduates to work co-opertively with teachers to find an appropriate program for a student and/or to help that teacher to change a student's behavior and/or to help get the most out of mainstreaming.

In a high school setting, the program structure must be changed to accommodate collaborative consultation techniques. The coursework was adequate in SPED 860 - the change must occur in the internal structure of the school involved.

Role play situations involving difficult to manage students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Brainstorm the "best" ways to handle situations and develop successful plans.

Regular education teachers:

This course tells about how to make regular education teachers feel less threatened and more a part of the system. This helps consultations.

Being in regular education, it has prompted me to seek out and use the special educator on a frequent basis.

Combination self-contained and resource teacher:

Perhaps more role playing and visits to schools.

Figure 4

Resource Teachers

Student	Handicap(s)	Ages	Grades	# of Students	Sex M	Sex F	*Survey Questions Q1	Q2	Q3
1	LD/BD	5-11	K-5	18	13	5	3	3	3
2	LD/BD	5-12	K-5	7	5	2	4	5	1
3	LD	6-11	K-5	14	11	3	4	4	3
4	BD	15-21	9-12	30	25	5	1	-	-
5	LD	17-19	11-12	20	16	4	3	3	-
					Mean		3	3.75	2.33

Self Contained

6	LD/BD	10	5	15	10	5	1	-	-
7	LD/BD/EMH	3-12	EC-8	21	12	9	4	3	2
8	LD/BD/EMH	-	2-3	8	5	3	3	1	1
9	BD	8-10	3-5	5	5	0	3	3	1
10	BD	12-14	7	10	10	-	3	4	1
11	TMH/SP	6-21	-	10	9	1	1	-	-
12	BD/LD/Sp-Lg	6	K	12	9	3	1	-	-
13	LD/BD/EMH	6-86-8	1-2	12	6	6	5	5	4
14	TMH	6-9	1-3	8	6	2	1	-	-
15	EMH/TMH	11-14	6-9	10	-	-	4	4	4
16	LD/CD	6-7	1-2	9	9	-	4	4	2
17	LD	11-15	6-8	51	36	15	3	3	3
18	TMH/EMH	7-11	-	11	6	5	1	-	-

Figure 4 con't

19	LD/BD/EMH	14-19	9-12	15	11	4	4	3	3
20	SC/LD	8-10	3-4	15	12	3	3	4	3
21	TMH	3-11	-	6	2	4	1	-	-
22	LD	6-9	1-3	15	11	4	3	3	-
23	LD	14-21	9-12	50	32	18	2	2	1
24	BD/LD	11-14	6-7	8	6	2	2	2	1
25	BD/ED	11-14	6-8	12	9	3	3	5	1
					Mean		2.65	3.29	2.08
			Both Resource and Self-Contained						
26	LD/BD	14-19	9-12	20	15	5	3	2	2
27	LD/BD	13-21	9-12	54	52	2	1	-	-
28	LD/BD	12-14	7-8	20	14	6	4	4	1
29	LD	10-14	5-8	40	25	15	3	3	1
30	-	16-21	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
31	LD/EMH	15-18	9-12	11	8	3	1	-	-
32	LD/BD/EMH	3-21	ECE-HS	-	-	-	3	4	1
33	LD/EMH	14-19	9-12	8	8	2	3	5	3
34	LD/EMH/BD/PH	3-12	EC-8	21	12	9	4	3	2
					Mean		2.55	3.5	1.67

Figure 4 cont.

Regular Education Teachers

35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
37	-	16-21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Mean NA

* 1-never 3-sometimes 5-always

2-seldom 4-frequently

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